**Changing Tides of Industrial Democracy:**

**Red Clydeside and the UCS Work-In as Political Heritage**

**Abstract:** Drawing on labour history, critical heritage studies and sociological literature on the entrepreneurial city, this articlefocuses on the cultural legacy of the famous 1971/72 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) work-in apropos Glasgow’s historical reputation as ‘Red Clydeside’. In doing so, the article considers the dispute’s continuing importance as a political resource for present-day debates about workers’ rights, Glasgow’s post-industrial identity, the rise of populist demagoguery and future of Britain’s industry more generally.

**Keywords:** UCS; Shipbuilding; Jimmy Reid; Red Clydeside; Glasgow; Communism; Working Class Heritage; City of Culture; Populism.

**From Merrie England to post-industrial ruination**

Though initially preoccupied with the conservation of ancient monuments, sites of famous battle scenes, country houses and parish churches, British heritage has greatly expanded in recent years to include a range of ordinary artefacts, landscapes and lived experiences. Almost every major town and city has a historic industrial quarter that has been converted into a heritage centre in which visitors can relive a-day-in-the-life of, for instance, a miner, shipbuilder, miller, blacksmith, seamstress, farmhand, and the rest. And there are numerous examples of local museums and heritage projects whose sole purpose is to exhibit and document everyday pastimes, ephemera, occupations and life stories, including diasporic ones. Such developments have been facilitated by *inter alia* the pedagogicisation of ‘history from below’ in schools and universities; the proliferation of amateur enthusiasts and Heritage Lottery funded community-based histories; the continuing growth of leisure time, cultural tourism and minority communities; and the prevalent use of digital technologies to remediate personal and collective memories. They are also symptomatic of wider international efforts to implement legislative frameworks that promote (and safeguard) heritage as a social process that encompasses a range of living cultures, for example, UNESCO’s 2001 *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and the 2005 *Convention on Cultural Diversity*.

And yet, a few scholars continue to echo misgivings, first voiced in the 1980s, that Britain’s ‘heritage industry’ offers little more than commodified spectacle, reactionary chic and Little Englandism. Writing twenty-odd years after his seminal *On Living in an Old Country* was originally published, Patrick Wright (2009, ix-xxv) notes that, while ‘many museums have actively embraced a wider sense of historicity’, the idea of British heritage still functioned as ‘imperial nostalgia’ that is mobilised ‘against a host of vividly imagined present-day bogeys’. Similarly, in a journalistic riposte to Raphael Samuel’s (1994) influential *Theatres of Memory*, Neil Ascherson (1995; cf. 1987a, 1987b) repeats some of his earlier objections to heritage as a calculating ‘term of obligation’ which binds ‘people not only to respect relics of the past but also to understand them … as “national symbols”’. In his latest book concerning the rise and fall of creative Britain, Robert Hewison’s (2014, cf. 1987) remains immovably pessimistic about neoliberalism’s facility to endlessly marketise Britain’s accumulated cultural capital for instrumental ends. And David Lowenthal, most recently, (2015, 585-610 and 1998, ix-xvii) maintains that ‘our ever more magnified attachments to heritage’, including the latest obsession with ‘short-lived icons’, ‘self-referential trivia’ and ‘personal remembrance’, has further exacerbated the ‘dwindling’ of any meaningful familiarity with the past.

Certainly, idealised representations of Merrie England, the industrial revolution, Rule Britannia, afternoon tea, the Dunkirk spirit, warm beer, the Union Jack, and seaside chintz, to name but a few, endure as unifying signifiers that can be cynically manipulated (see also, Gilroy 2004 and 2005; Littler and Naidoo 2005; Hatherley 2016). But this is not to say that all UK heritage is necessarily symptomatic of national decline and a post-colonial melancholia or reducible to conservative, entrepreneurial and tourist kitsch. As noted by Laurajane Smith (2006, 11), though institutional decisions about what to conserve and exhibit tend to draw upon ‘authorised’ discourses about heritage (‘grand narratives of nation and class on the one hand, and technical expertise and aesthetic judgment on the other’), increasingly, heritage practitioners and cultural agencies are starting to recognise ‘subaltern’ discourses that articulate a myriad of socio-cultural values, relations and processes. As such, the semantics and practices of heritage are best understood as a site of hegemonic struggle, capable of producing a range of negotiated meanings (see for example, Dicks 2000; Stanton 2006). Moreover, attending to these multidimensional assemblages, intersections and contingencies, is vital for improving the relational dialogue that connects heritage experts, policy-makers and the public (Smith 2006; Winter 2012; Harrison 2013). Such a focus also provides a helpful segue with which to pursue neglected or underdeveloped avenues of interdisciplinary research.

One such area of collaborative inquiry concerns the transnational uses of industrial heritage and public-labour history by and for working-class activists, communities and organisations (often in partnership with academics, curators, archivists, artists, local councils and national funding bodies). Unsurprisingly, a good deal of the related literature examines narratives of deindustrialisation, ruination, displacement, trauma and regeneration, as lately summarised in a 2013 special issue of the journal for *International Labour and Working Class History*. More specifically, several of the contributors (for example, Linkon 2013; Strangleman 2013) highlight ways in which creative processes of remembering working life have facilitated emergent forms of social capital, political solidarity and communal belonging. This is particularly true of former mining regions that have started to rethink the 1984/85 strike and its aftermath as national heritage, thereby enabling them to revalue their collective history and to renew their struggle for retrospective justice (see Stephenson and Wray 2005; Smith 2006; Bailey and Popple 2011; Williams 2018). Likewise, the 1971/72 UCS work-in, and its association with the political traditions of Red Clydeside, has inspired a wealth of cultural representations and related heritage practices that speak as much to present-day debates concerning workers’ rights and the future of British industry as they do the past.

Following Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott (2003) and Steven High’s (2013) respective criticisms of ‘smokestack nostalgia’ and ‘ruin porn’ (see also High and Lewis 2007; cf. Edensor 2005; Mah 2012), this paper thus represents an attempt to shift our attention away from a voyeuristic aesthetics of decline to continuing public engagement with labour history. In doing so, one is mindful of Lucy Taka’s (2009) reservations about industrial heritage’s tendency to disregard labour’s collectivist traditions, the history of class struggle and their ongoing importance. The article also confronts related issues concerning urban gentrification and the appropriation of working-class culture as a marketable commodity. Apart from restructuring labour markets and the privatisation of social housing, numerous commentators have noted (some enthusiastically, others less so) how the use of state-led gentrification in urban policy tends to involve cultural makeovers whose primary function is to create new social relations of consumption and entrepreneurship (for example, Bianchini and Parkinson 1993; Landry and Bianchini 1995; Zukin 1995; Smith 1996; Scott 2000; Belfiore 2002; Florida 2002; Evans and Shaw 2004; Mommaas 2004; Grodach and Silver 2013). This is especially so apropos Glasgow’s regeneration as the archetypal post-industrial city whose renaissance has attracted new middle-class residents, private investment and cultural tourists. At the same time, such developments have been criticised for marginalising the city’s existing working-class culture and practices; in fact, there are several examples of local challenges and resistance dating back to late 1980s, which begs the question: whose Glasgow, whose heritage?

Finally, that the writing of this article has coincided with a worldwide resurgence in nationalist sentiment and reactionary populism is a mixed blessing for international debates in heritage and working-class studies. The legitimation crisis unleashed by the outcome of the Brexit referendum and the electoral success of Donald Trump (and other far-right politicians) raises several interconnecting matters which have some bearing on the long-term socio-political legacies of transnational deindustrialization, be it in North America, Europe or elsewhere in the world. However, as recently noted in the Preface to the 2019 *Socialist Register*, such difficult questions ‘cannot be addressed via general abstractions’; rather, they ‘need to be located with respect to specific countries and regions’ (Panitch and Albo 2019, x). The UCS industrial action and the subsequent decline of shipbuilding on Clydeside is salient on two accounts. First, the campaign served as a catalyst for the revival of neo-nationalist currents throughout the 1970s, indeed, the memory of the work-in resurfaced during the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.1 On the other hand, the popular-democratic upsurge in Scottish nationalism, further evident in the widespread support for the Scottish Nationalist Party in the 2015 and 2017 general elections, did not translate into a national mandate for leaving the European Union during the 2016 referendum. Though there are diverging opinions about why this was so and the relationship between the two votes (see McBurney and Davidson 2015; Davidson 2016), what is certain is that the referendums have opened a discursive space in which talk of a re-industrialised Scottish economy, largely centered upon Clydeside’s shipbuilding legacy, has become a quintessential part of the national political debate, about which more later.

**The UCS work-in**

Following the recommendations of the Geddes Report (1966) and the *Shipbuilding Industry Act* (1967), the newly amalgamated Upper Clydeside Shipbuilding (UCS) became the largest shipbuilding consortium in Britain.2 Despite the then Labour government’s continuing efforts to put the industry on a more sustainable footing, UCS began to experience serious financial difficulties because of ongoing poor management and a backlog of unprofitable contracts. By 1971, it was estimated that a £6 million bailout was needed if UCS was to survive. However, following the emergency nationalisation of Rolls Royce in 1971, the newly elected Conservative government was not prepared to assist supposedly ‘Lame Duck’ industries, thus forcing UCS to go into receivership, the immediate closure of two of the yards, the likely loss of 8,500 jobs in shipbuilding and a further 20,000 posts in associated industries (Murray 1971, 6). The UCS shop stewards responded by declaring immediate industrial action; but rather than go on strike, they decided to occupy three of the UCS shipyards and to declare a work-in (Buchan 1972; Thompson and Hart 1972; McGill 1973, 101-10; Coates 1981, 21-38; Foster and Woolfson 1986). The first such campaign in the history of British trade unionism, redundant workers continued to report for work as usual and to complete what orders the shipyard had, even though they had been removed from the liquidator’s payroll.

 One of the earliest attempts to rally public support for the eighteen-month occupation was Cinema Action’s short campaign film, *UCS 1* (1971).3 In keeping with its previous ‘cinetracts’ of industrial struggles, the film collectivesought to capture the live drama of the work-in through its use of an agitprop documentary style with no scene rehearsal or narrative commentary. Apart from seeing graphic footage of men going about their jobs and mass demonstrations through the streets of Glasgow, we hear apprentices, workers and shop stewards communicate *their* understanding of the political events surrounding the work-in. The film also gives expression to the dignity of ‘an honest day’s work’, the ‘collective pride’ that building a ship occasions (both among the workforce and the wider community) and a spirit of social hope. But unlike the Griersonian social realism of the early to mid twentieth century British Documentary Movement, which has since been criticised for romanticising the heroic masculinity of industrial Britain and its consensualist politics (see Durgnat 1970; Macpherson 1980; Hood 1983; Colls and Dodd 1985; Winston 1995; Dodd and Dodd 1996), *UCS 1* does not hesitate to portray the contradictory realities of shipbuilding, warts and all. For example, juxtaposed alongside several close-up shots of arduous work conditions (deafening machinery, welding fumes, inclement weather, among others), one of the workers admits to shipbuilding ‘being a horrible job’. Nor does Cinema Action’s film indulge in a naive celebration of the ‘Scotland on the move’ discourse that characterised many of the workaday documentaries produced by the Films of Scotland Committee from the late 1930s through to the 1960s (see McArthur 1982, 57-63). Instead, *UCS 1* leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the pernicious socio-economic processes at work in Glasgow’s shipyards apropos the historical necessity of labourism and class struggle.

More specifically, *UCS 1* includes footage of Jimmy Reid, spokesperson for the UCS Coordinating Committee and a prominent member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (as were many of the other shop stewards).4 Reid’s powerful oratory, his unerring faith in the goodness of humanity and commitment to socialist ideals (see MacAskill 2017), was to set the tone for the work-in: ‘The Upper Clyde is being sacrificed on the altar of sheer political dogma. We refuse to accept that somebody sitting in Whitehall is going to kill our industry’; ‘We don’t only build ships on the Clyde, we build men who have guts and intelligence and who will take some moving. They have taken on the wrong people and we will fight’; ‘Just now we are in the midst of the woods. And there are wolves ready to pounce if we make a tactical error, if we turn our backs for a moment someone will jump on them’; ‘It is time that the working class wrote a charter of rights, at the heart of which would be the right to work. If the government cannot guarantee that right, and if the social system cannot guarantee that right, then we must change the Government or modify the system’ (Reid 1976, 84-98). Perhaps Reid’s most notable statement of intent was the one he gave on 30 July 1971, the first official day of the work-in, during which he addressed thousands of workers from a makeshift platform and made a passionate appeal for well-ordered solidarity:

We are not going to strike. We are not even having a sit-in strike. We are taking over the yard because we refuse to accept that faceless men, or any group of men in Whitehall or anyone else, can take decisions that devastate our livehoods with impunity … There’s a basic elementary right involved – that’s our right to work. We’re not strikers. We are responsible people and we will conduct ourselves with dignity and discipline … And there will be no hooliganism. There will be no vandalism. There will be no bevvying because the world is watching us, and it is our responsibility to conduct ourselves responsibly and with dignity and with maturity. (Cited in Foster & Woolfson 1986, 197, 200)

Reid’s emotive rhetoric also captured the imagination of the general public, especially in Scotland, which was crucial: in part because it triggered a series of public marches and one-day strikes in support of the industrial dispute and the much broader question of Scottish national development and devolution (Foster and Woolfson 1986, 16, 392-400; Tuckett 1986, 394-404); in part because it made it harder for UCS management and the more moderate elements of the TUC to undermine the work-in by attempting to exploit craft sectionalism among the workforce, whose unity of purpose remained solid; but because it also helped to generate donations totalling £485,000, which enabled workers’ wages to be paid over the course of the 458-day campaign (McGill 1973, 101-10; Coates 1981, 34-5). Amid growing fears that worse was still to come, on 28 February 1972 the Heath government announced a £35 million injection of cash into three of the UCS yards (reconstituted as Govan Shipbuilders Ltd) and unspecified financial assistance to smooth the purchase of the fourth yard by Wayne Harbin of Marathon, an American oil-rig manufacturer (Foster and Woolfson 1986, 311-79). After several months of further negotiations, and satisfied that Clydeside’s immediate future was guaranteed, the Coordinating Committee called an official end to the work-in at a final mass meeting. Addressing a press conference immediately afterwards, Reid (cited in Foster and Woolfson 1986, 377) thanked all those who had supported the UCS campaign, claiming it ‘was a victory not just for the workers but the whole Scottish community’.

**Revolt on the Clyde**

Of course, Reid is but one of several distinguished Red Clydesiders, male and female, to have campaigned tirelessly for workers’ rights and social justice. Originally coined as a term to describe Glasgow’s reputation as Britain’s focal point for labour militancy and class conflict during the early twentieth century (Foster 1990; Duncan and McIvor 1992; Griffin 2015; Gallacher 2017), ‘Red Clydeside’ has since become popular vernacular for emphasising Glasgow’s much longer and more recent political culture. Besides several other contemporaneous socialist organisations that had a strong presence in Glasgow5, the city’s legacy as the ‘Petrograd of the West’ is particularly associated with the formation and subsequent development of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) from 1920 onwards.6 As lately noted by John Foster (2017), Glasgow was the epicentre for much of Britain’s pro-Bolshevik activities during the interwar period, which involved several industrial unrests and community-based protests. Indeed, Glasgow was home to many of the early CPGB’s leading figures. Apart from the legendary Willie Gallacher and Helen Crawfurd, both of whom met Lenin in Moscow, Arthur McManus became the Party’s first Chair, and Robert Page Arnot, Willie Paul, Harry McShane and Tom Bell were either members of the Party’s initial Central Committee or full-time officials. And despite the occasional falling out between the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and the Party’s industrial cadre, communist shop stewards were to virtually dominate Glasgow’s Trades Council for the next sixty years.

Notwithstanding revisionist arguments that have endeavoured to debunk the Red Clydeside narrative (see McLean 1983; Melling 1990), several cultural historians and geographers have demonstrated ways in which ordinary Glaswegians and researchers continue to identify with the city’s radical history. Writing shortly after the death of Harry McShane (the last of the original Red Clydesiders) in the early 1990s, Terry Brotherstone (1992, 75) argued that a ‘rejuvenated understanding’ of the politics and events associated with such persons mattered ‘more so than ever’; however, not as ‘things merely to admire’, but in the context of changing international relations, the collapse of old certainties and the legacy of Thatcherism. Drawing on assemblage theory and the notion of ‘usable pasts’, Paul Griffin (2015) has emphasised the importance of this historical period for contemporary popular memory, working class presence and the conceptualisation of labour agency, while simultaneously recognising the need to foreground ‘more relational understandings’ of Glasgow’s radical past, thereby avoiding the one dimensionality of ‘white labourism’ or collapsing Red Clydeside into a singular tradition. Similarly, Ewan Gibbs’ (2016) research illustrates how a certain ‘moral economy of housing and social amenities’ runs throughout several instances of community mobilisation on Clydeside, from the 1915 rent strike through to the poll tax non-payment campaign of the late 1980s (see also, Foster 2003). And though to be expected, the UCS work-in epitomised Glasgow’s long-established reputation for social and industrial activism.

From a heritage point of view, many of the above-mentioned persons and events are depicted in Ken Currie’s epic Glasgow History Cycle paintings (Glasgow Museums 1990). Specially commissioned by the People’s Palace Museum to mark the bicentenary of the butchery of the Calton weavers, Scotland’s first trade union martyrs, Currie’s series of eight panels are a remarkable pageant of working-class struggle and organisation: from the tragic events of 1787 and the then popular slogan, ‘Weave Truth With Trust’, the planting of the Tree of Liberty in Scotland; the 1819 Paisley Rising and the execution of its two principal leaders, John Baird and Andrew Hardie; one of the great Reform Bill processions, overlooked by a group of trade unionists participating in a secret initiation ceremony; a group of foundry workers forging the main tenet of the 1848 Communist Manifesto, ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle’, and the birth of the Scottish Labour Party; the 1915 rent strikes and Mary Barbour’s ‘Suffragette Army’, John Maclean and James Maxton rallying workers during the Battle of George Square; the ‘Hungry Thirties’ and the march of the National Unemployed Workers Movement from Glasgow to London; the UCS work-in and the shop stewards’ celebrated banner, ‘Union is Strength’; through to the 1984/85 miners’ strike, Women Against Pit Closures, the sun rising over the shipbuilding cranes of Govan, and a yet-to-come May Day rally on Glasgow Green.

A Glaswegian communist himself, Currie was mindful of the ‘value of having an overview of this history and how it can teach and inspire in the present day … as something utterly precious, something that had to be kept alive at all costs – a thing, in fact, of awesome cultural power’ (Glasgow Museums 1990, 17). Tellingly, not for the first or last time, Currie also rebuked the ‘traditional art world’ (artists, critics, curators, dealers, collectors, historians and theoreticians) for ‘floundering from one extreme to another in their quest for market-inspired novelty’ and for attempting to ‘minimise the impact of artists who attempt, through their work, to challenge their cultural hegemony’ (Glasgow Museums 1990, 20-21). Like the subjects of his paintings, Currie’s commitment to political art is exemplary (see Thompson 2009). Additionally, Currie was anxious to ‘avoid approaching the project … as historical narrative illustration, like a lifeless frieze of events and characters’; rather, he ‘wanted to present a cycle of images that showed the ebb and flow of an emergent mass movement, where the real heroines and heroes were the many unknown working class Scots who fought so selflessly for their rights’ (Glasgow Museums 1990, 17). The panel featuring the miners’ strike is decidedly apposite in this respect. Intended as both the first and last in the cycle, Currie describes at great length how he wanted to bring together past, present and future in one image, a rousing socialist call-to-arms for fledgling and upcoming generations:

I imagined a group of young Scots examining labour movement artefacts, drawn from the People’s Palace collection. A figure, representing history and knowledge, has unfurled some old tattered and torn banner … As this unfurls, the figure shines a light on it for the assembled group to see, symbolic of the illumination of previously unknown knowledge shining a light into the darkness of the past … The banner ‘unfurls’ through each panel until returning to its origin, where history is seen to be continually unfurling. What remains rolled up in the banner represents the future and the responsibility of young Scots in using the power gained through a knowledge and understanding of their past to realise this future (Glasgow Museums 1990, 18).

However, Currie’s self-professed ‘optimism of the will’ coincided with a downturn in class politics. While the forward march of labour, to paraphrase Eric Hobsbawm’s familiar phrase, had started to lose pace as far back as the late 1970s, trade union membership and rank-and-file militancy waned dramatically throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2018, 6), a symptom of deindustrialisation, mass unemployment, neoliberal revisionism, working-class conservatism, four successive Tory governments and a *fin de siècle* Britain. As labourism diminished, so its influence in the CPGB declined, giving way to a heterodox cadre of metropolitan intellectuals, better known as Eurocommunists. Following a prolonged spell of rancorous argumentation about programmatic development (which came to a head during the miners’ strike) and an unprecedented purge of its working-class membership and industrial militants by the then Eurocommunist leadership, the Party was finally dissolved in 1991 (see Foster 2003; Laybourn and Collette 2003, 183-207; Andrews 2004; Parker 2012). Ironically, a good many Glasgow-based communists, including former UCS shop stewards, were among those expelled from the CPGB throughout this period (Beckett 1998, 201; Rafeek 2008, 210-11; Parker 2017; Rafeek 2008, 210-11), forcing them to regroup around the breakaway Communist Party of Britain and the Communist Party of Scotland (founded in 1988 and 1992 respectively), a revised edition of *The British Road to Socialism* and the editorial board of the *Morning Star* daily newspaper.

**Whose Glasgow? Whose heritage?**

While Glasgow and its metropolitan region of Clydeside began to experience the onset of deindustrialisation as far back as the 1960s, employment in the district’s heavy industries contracted significantly following the election of the Conservatives in 1979, the rolling back of the state’s postwar commitment to full-employment and the resulting demise of Britain’s manufacturing base. Glasgow’s local economy was further compounded by its dependency on over-specialisation, the gradual retreat of inward investment and the growth of foreign competition in the shipbuilding, textiles and metals-related sectors (MacInnes 1995; Pike 2017). Though figures vary, it is estimated that the city lost approximately 65,000 manufacturing jobs, 10 per cent of its total employment, between 1981 and 1991 (Gibbs 2016, 448). The rate of decline was especially marked in shipbuilding: whereas the upper-Clyde employed approximately 70,000 workers at its peak before WWI, when Glasgow was still considered to be ‘the Second City of the Empire’, by 1980 the upper-Clyde employed less than 13,000 people and in 1990, with only two shipyards remaining, there was less than 6000 workers (Booth and Boyle 1993, 26-7). Put another way, compared to a Scottish average of 12.2 per cent, Glasgow’s unemployment rose to 16.5 per cent in 1981. And the problem of enforced leisure was especially acute among Glasgow’s youth: for example, a staggering 29 per cent of 16- to 24- year-olds in Pollock (a large housing estate on the south-western side of Glasgow) were without regular employment by the early 1980s (Gibbs 2016, 448). During this period Glasgow was to also experience the greatest percentage decrease of population compared to other major UK conurbations (see Middleton 1987, 6-13; Paddison 1993, 343; Boyle *et al* 2008, 315), largely as a result of the city’s younger and more skilled populace migrating to other UK regions, which was to further exacerbate the outward movement of new industrial development, private capital and the local tax base.

It was against this backdrop of extraordinary urban devalorisation that Glasgow’s District and City Councils (some local councillors had visited rustbelt cities in the USA during the late 1970s to witness their urban transformation) embarked upon a series of regeneration policies and place marketing initiatives to make the city’s urban environment more attractive to investors and tourists. Acting on the advice of Glasgow Action, an informal think-tank comprising local elites, and with financial assistance from the Scottish Development Agency, much of the strategic focus was on the use of leisure and high-street retail to enhance Glasgow’s service economy (see Paddison 1993; MacLeod 2002; Boyle *et al* 2008; Gray 2015). In particular, the city made a significant investment in new cultural facilities (notable legacies include the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, the Burrell Collection, the Tramway theatre, and the restoration of the Merchant City industrial quarters) and hosted a range of high profile events (starting with the 'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign in 1983, followed by the Garden Festival in 1988, the European City of Culture in 1990 and the Commonwealth Games in 2014, among others). Those sympathetic to the city’s makeover have tended to highlight the creation of over 10,000 person-years worth of jobs in the cultural industries sector alone, largely sustained by a dramatic increase in cultural tourism, which peaked at an estimated 4.3 million visits in 1990 (Wishart 1991; Myerscough 1992; Booth and Boyle 1993; Johnson 2016, 115). Glasgow’s transformation has yielded several prestigious accolades too (for example, European City of Architecture in 1999 and UNESCO City of Music in 2008), which has further boosted the city’s more cosmopolitan image.

Glasgow’s urban renaissance has also resulted in parts of the city’s increasingly derelict waterfront being sensitively redeveloped for cultural heritage purposes. For example, after raising £5.8 million between 2009-14, the development agency Govan Workspace Ltd restored the former Fairfield shipyard headquarters, which had been derelict since 2001. As well as offering commercial offices for local businesses, a community-based multimedia heritage centre ‘now tells the remarkable and enduring story of Fairfield from the cutting-edge technology of the 1860s to the state-of-the-art ships built by the BAE systems today’.7 In 2017, the project was awarded Best Creative Re-use of an Industrial Building by the Association for Industrial Archaeology. And there are plans to work with local schools and adult learners to develop related oral history, arts, photography and filmmaking projects. The opening of the Riverside Museum of Transport and the three-masted, nineteenth-century, Clyde-built sailing barque *Glenlee* as a ship museum, both in 2011, has helped to further celebrate and regenerate Glasgow’s maritime heritage. Winner of the 2013 European Museum of the Year Award, the Riverside welcomed 1,355,359 visitors in 2017, making it the fourth most popular attraction in Scotland.8 And the *Glenlee*, now known as The Tall Ship, offers year-round educational and boatbuilding courses, and, as the only one of her kind in the UK, was recently distinguished as part of the National Historic Fleet.

Equally, as with many other civic-led attempts to regenerate postindustrial communities (see for example, Dicks 2000; Curtis 2003; Clark and Gibbs 2017), the redevelopment of Glasgow from, to quote MacInnes (1995, 89), ‘an industrial metropolis to a centre of consumption’, has attracted a fair amount of criticism and resistance over the years, much of which has centred on the cultural politics of the city’s heritage.9 Established shorty after Glasgow was nominated for the European City of Culture 1990, Workers City was especially opposed to the gentrification of Glasgow’s inner-city and its rebranding as a creative quarter.10 The group’s *modus operandi* was deliberately irreverent and antagonistic, evident in its direct actions, two edited books and several zine-type newsletters.11 (Boyle and Hughes 1991; Mooney 2004, 330-33). For example, leading member Farquhar McLay (1988) bemoaned the Establishment’s romanticised appropriation of Glasgow’s working-class history, thus rendering it ‘a safe commodity’. Contra this apolitical recuperation, he argued that what is ‘vital’ about the ‘tradition of working-class people refusing to be passive and cowed … of grassroots solidarity and total distrust of power and officialdom’ is that ‘we make certain the same spark that once gave it life can be struck anew … Otherwise it is just cloying encumbrance, a nostalgic wank, an academic pastime’ (McLay 1988, 1-4). Similarly, in a related monthly newsletter entitled *The Glasgow Keelie*, the renowned chronicler of working-class Glasgow, James D. Young (1990), argued that the cultural elites’ sanitised repackaging of ‘Glaswegian workers’ collective memory of past struggles’ was a deliberate attempt to affect a state of ‘severe amnesia’. Furthermore:

A usable past – a meaningful, relevant Labour history – means that the values of authentic socialism need to be fought for and fostered, so that the majority of people can make decisions for fundamental change designed to make the present the past. Therefore LABOUR HISTORY MUSEUMS should not serve as monuments or mausoleums. They should become resource centres to equip those who are struggling to eliminate unemployment, elitist education, poor housing and poverty (Young 1990).

Though comprised mainly of uncharacteristic anarcho-socialist artists and writers, some of whom were vilified as unpatriotic heretics (see Mooney 2004, 330), several Glasgow-based academics have noted that Workers City articulated a variety of concerns which genuinely represented a wider public disaffection with the £32.7 million cost of the event and the promotion of urban entrepreneurism more generally (for example, Boyle and Hughes 1991; Paddison 1993; Mooney 2004; Garcia 2005; Boyle *et al* 2008). Indeed, apart from a prolonged struggle to stop the then Labour-led Council from selling a third of Glasgow Green to property developers, one of the group’s main campaigns during this period was to lobby against the perceived victimisation of Elspeth King, unofficial Curator of the People’s Palace for over fifteen years. Distinguished for her innovative exhibitions and wider efforts to preserve Glasgow’s contemporary working-class history (she was one of the driving forces behind the commissioning of Currie’s pictorial ode to Scotland’s radical tradition; see King 1995), many Glaswegians and fellow-professionals felt that she had been unfairly overlooked for the post of Director of Museums (Gray 1990). To add insult to injury, King was also disregarded for the newly created post of Keeper of Social History, resulting in a petition containing over 10,000 signatures, some 500 letters appearing in the local and national press, and public demonstrations outside the City Chambers and that year’s National Conference of Curators (Boyle and Hughes 1991, 225-26). In a broadside aimed at ‘the museum hierarchy, which is becoming more and more associated with the class-conscious English heritage industry’, the otherwise conservative *Glasgow Herald* (29 May 1990) summed up the controversy thus:

The Establishment has never liked Glasgow Green. It belonged to the common people, an area of shared grazing and public washing. It was a place where revolution was preached along with the kingdom of God, where banners were raised and social grievance shouted aloud … Little could better illustrate the Establishment's view of Glasgow Green than the rejection of Elspeth King … in her application to become the city's keeper of social history. It was, in effect, her own job, a position she was fulfilling superbly … Why, then has Elspeth King not been given the curatorship of social history she so richly deserves? … The answer may lie in the blood that was so often shed where the People's Palace now stands. Elspeth King is a coalminer's daughter … She is a woman. She is a Scot. She is the wrong class, the wrong sex, and she does not toe the Establishment line. That is why she did not get the job.

Many more ordinary Glaswegians were concerned that the ‘Culture City’ enterprise that characterised much of Glasgow’s urban regeneration from the late 1980s onwards was a deliberate attempt to sanitise the city’s working-class heritage (arguably, Elspeth King’s demotion was a consequence of her candid opposition to such developments). In a revealing two-part documentary produced for Scottish Television (STV), Jimmy Reid toured Glasgow to ask the populace what the 1990 European City of Culture festival meant to them and to celebrate the city’s time-honored cultural pastimes (for example, ballroom dancing, bingo, football, public houses, social clubs, folk music, community theatre, ceilidh, music hall variety), much of which was overlooked by the Culture City organisers.12 Notwithstanding a few positive remarks about Glasgow benefiting from an increase in tourism and arts funding, many of the televised respondents were clearly skeptical: ‘it’s ignoring the people of Glasgow … it should be more involved in community projects … maybe we should be helping the people more’; ‘the portrayal of Glasgow as a city has gone into the hands of people who aren’t … representative of Glasgow or Scotland’; ‘the City of Culture is forgetting its own people’; ‘we can’t afford £75 for Pavarotti … the likes of us don’t know there’s a festival on’; ‘they’ve confused culture with art, and they bring particular forms of art here so they can encourage sponsorship and so-called jobs’.13 Such remarks help to further contextualise many of the complaints made by Workers City, not least the claim that Glasgow 1990’s use of culture was purely instrumental and economistic.

Reid himself was repeatedly critical of the festival’s programme of events and its failure to engage Glasgow’s own cultural talent and working-class communities. ‘Another bean feast for the well-heeled, cultural elite’, ‘A big con job, there’s nothing in it for the punters’, were just two of Reid’s many dismissive remarks.14 Even Robert Palmer, one of the festival’s key organisers, acknowledged (albeit reluctantly) that there were legitimate concerns about whether the City of Culture was being ‘imposed upon’ Glasgow, prompting Jimmy Reid to observe that the festival could have done more to ‘push out the perimeters of what is generally understood as culture; so as to embrace a much wider range of artistic activities; so as to embrace a much wider range of people’15 (cf. Wishart 1991; Myerscough 1992). In fact, compared to the £18 million expenditure on international artists and hospitality for multinational corporations, only £5 million of the festival’s programming budget was earmarked for community events (Garcia 2004, 107). We also hear Reid highlight the importance of the People’s Palace apropos Glasgow’s history and its working-class, not least their ‘struggle for a better life’. Unlike much of the 1990 Year of Culture, the People’s Palace ‘deals with events and experiences that the people of Glasgow can relate to’. Reid also alluded to the above-mentioned ‘King affair’ in that he accused ‘those who want to revamp the city’s image’ of ‘despising’ the way the museum ‘exudes pride in Glasgow’s proletarian tradition’.16 Similarly, we see Reid praise Glasgow’s Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum for its popular attractions and ‘the hubbub of enquiring human beings’17, the inference being, once again, that the Cultural City festivities were unpopular because of the organisers’ failure to represent and connect with Glasgow’s plebian culture.

These recurrent activist and public criticisms affirm Gordon MacLeod’s (2002, 604-5) wider observation that the benefits of hallmark projects like festivals ‘are often more readily experienced by those, like tourists and place-mobile capitalists, who live beyond the immediate locality’. Indeed, several urban geographers have questioned the uneven political economy of Glasgow’s culture-led urban regeneration. Drawing on David Harvey (1989) and Henri Lefebvre’s (2003) seminal work on the urbanisation of capital and the rise of the entrepreneurial city, Neil Gray (2008 and 2015) has repeatedly criticised the Clyde Gateway and Merchant City regeneration projects as ‘new urban frontiers’ apropos Glasgow’s socio-spatial recomposition, not least the City Council’s efforts to ‘revalorise property values and land rents’ (Gray 2009, 14). Though more sympathetic to its marketing policy, Ronan Paddison (1993, 348) still cautioned that Glasgow’s attempts to project a new ‘postindustrial image’ had failed ‘to come to terms with its previous existence as an industrial city’. Beatriz Garcia (2004, 323-4) also notes that Glasgow’s ‘top-down’ use of ‘cultural hallmark investments’ has failed to ‘improve the conditions of deprived local communities’. Instead, such initiatives have tended to benefit ‘high income groups while pushing those with low incomes further to the margins’. Likewise, Mark Boyle *et al* (2008, 317) observed that the City Council’s ‘faith in culture-led place marketing was ill founded. Glasgow was miles better, but only for some – those able to cash in on the rebirth of the city centre as a postindustrial service centre’. And Gerry Mooney (2004, 336) has similarly argued that ‘claims of Glasgow’s “renaissance” and “regeneration” are rather questionable’ when one considers the city’s ongoing social and economic problems.

Such critiques also go to the heart of debates, outlined in this article’s introduction, concerning the uses of industrial heritage and issues of ownership, community development, agency and representation. Arguably, Glasgow’s new urban politics reinforce Steven High’s (2013, 141-42) observation that ‘the destruction of industrial areas and the people who call these places home’ necessarily involves ‘acts of enforced forgetting’ and ‘cultural erasure’: what ‘is rendered visible or invisible, audible or inaudible, in our postindustrial and postmodern times is thus highly significant’. Following a detailed study of four industrial heritage museums in Australia and Tasmania, Lucy Taksa (2009, 92) expresses like reservations about ‘culture-based’ approaches to postindustrial urban renewal, not least because: ‘… the commodification of selected memories of and images from the industrial past at such sites serves to obscure the traditionally collectivist and political concerns of labour history by eradicating all vestiges of pollution, inequality, oppression and conflict’. Robert Chidester and David Gadsby (2009, 134) have also documented how the gentrification of former industrial spaces tends to marginalise actual working-class communities whilst simultaneously capitalising on their history ‘as a history of place over people’. Meanwhile, Alison Mah’s comparative study of industrial ruination in the UK, Canada and Russia makes a compelling argument for understanding urban decline as a lived process, thereby challenging ‘one-size-fits-all’ regeneration strategies that tend to see deindustrialisation as a matter ‘of historical record’ (Mah 2012, 201). In doing so, Mah offers several valuable insights for urban policy actors and ways of rethinking dominant models of postindustrial revitalisation.

**The aftermath of the UCS work-in**

Given the above context it is perhaps unsurprising that by the 2000s there was growing concern that, despite it still being living history and the publication of several books about shipbuilding on the Clyde (for example, Bellamy 2001; Johnman and Johnston 2001; Morrison 2003), popular reminiscences of the UCS dispute (and Glasgow’s working-class heritage more generally) were beginning to wane, especially among Glasgow’s youth.18 Indeed, teacher and poet David Betteridge (2011, 21) claimed that it had got to the point of UCS ‘being confused with a clothing store in Clydebank’, prompting him and several veterans of the dispute to edit an anthology of (some reprinted, others newly commissioned) UCS-related songs and poems to celebrate the work-in’s 40th anniversary. Much of the chosen material was composed and performed by renowned Scottish folksingers and poets (a few of whom had worked as shipyard apprentices in their youth and had helped to organise UCS benefit gigs): Jimmy MacGregor, Danny Kyle, Matt McGinn, Jim Mclean, Alistair MacDonald, Leo Coyle, Geordie McIntyre, Arthur Johnstone, Bill Sutherland, Jim Aitken, Tessa Ransford, Edwin Morgan, Aonghas MacNeacail, Gerda Stevenson, Brain Whittingham, Donna Franceschild, Alistair Findlay, Chrys Salt, George McEwan, among others. Whilst the various lyrics convey a range of emotions and interpretation, the collection leaves the reader in no doubt that the UCS work-in was a monumental triumph for the labour movement and is a lasting testimony to what can be achieved when trade unions coordinate democratically (led by principled rank and filers from the bottom up) and in broad alliance with other progressive socio-political forces. To take just one example:

Can we combine to build afresh that bold idea

that found expression and a home at UCS?

Can we re-launch it on the carrying stream

of people’s wants and dearest dreams?

Can we extend it to the point it captures

greater powers, and thus rebuts,

with allies everywhere,

the might that Capital will bring to bear?

…

Present struggle cries to know

the complex story of its past. Take it!

Save it from erasure, or revision’s grasp!

What happened here in ‘71

can be no Terra nullius of the mind, open

for errors to invade. It’s where,

ablaze and wise, we entered history,

and showed a way whereby a future

might be made

*David Betteridge ‘Showing a Way’*

The compilation also includes a motto text from an essay by the late John Berger, some of the cartoons that Bob Starrett produced for the UCS Coordinating Committee’s newsletter *Bulletins*, a reproduction of a large black-and-white UCS drawing by Ken Currie19, several brief essays and a Further Reading list compiled by John Foster. Originally published in *The Drawbridge*, Berger’s (2007) article warns both readers and writers that ‘the most effective way of destroying people’s sense of identity is to systematically dismantle and fragment the story they have so far told themselves about their own lives, to erase the past’. Against the ‘political machines’ that would have us dismember, Berger recalls a sentence by Anton Chekov that impels writers and artists to ‘describe a situation so truthfully … that the reader can no longer evade it’. Following Berger’s line of argument, Ann Henderson (2011, 12) of the STUC, writes of how ‘sharing our history’ can bring ‘strength and optimism for the future’; furthermore, reviving the ‘campaign skills, energy and coordination, and the legacy of a movement which put people before profit’ is vitally important ‘if we are to do justice to those who have gone before’. Similarly, Freddy Anderson’s acclaimed ‘Ballad of the Red Clyde’ begins with a reproach to ‘fake historians’ and ‘hiders of truth’ before continuing to tell the Clyde’s history through his own lived experiences (cited in Betteridge 2011, 94). And David Betteridge (2011, 31) concludes his introductory remarks by noting that, insofar as the ‘right to work’ remains a site of daily struggle, the example of the UCS work-in is best understood as ‘unfinished business’, albeit ‘in new forms’ and ‘in new times’.

 Additionally, some of the surviving UCS veterans commissioned Glasgow-based arts production company FairPley to help coordinate a programme of commemorative public events. One of the main occasions was a UCS concert that featured a range of musical tributes, including a premiere of ‘Work-in at UCS - a celebration suite’ by Eddie McGuire of the Whistlebinkies. Organised in conjunction with Glasgow’s Celtic Connections festival and some of the political songwriters who had contributed to *Unity Creates Strength* (the title of a UCS fundraiser album produced by Jim MacLean) the aim of the concert according to Unite’s Scottish Secretary, Pat Rafferty, was to renew artistic links with the work-in and to ‘provide an example for the struggle of today’s trade unionists’.20 Likewise, distinguished Glasgow folk activist and an AEU shop steward with Glasgow Transport at the time of the work-in, Arthur Johnstone, thought the campaign was ‘one of the occasions when the people won their case’ and ‘well worth setting down in history’.21 Guest of Honour, Tony Benn, characteristically noted, ‘That single event 40 years ago showed you don’t have to accept what the Government say. You can take a stand and make a fight … the lesson of Upper Clyde is a lesson we all have to learn in how to respond to difficulties. You don’t have to accept your fate’.22 And Jimmy Cloughley, a member of the UCS Coordinating Committee, observed that ‘Unity of purpose, honesty, leadership and democracy are the lessons of UCS’.23

 Other USC40 events included a two-week exhibition in Glasgow’s Mitchell Library foyer and the STUC ‘People First’ rally to protest cuts to public sector jobs and the right to work. A debate in the Scottish Parliament on a motion submitted by Hugh Henry MSP, ‘That the Parliament acknowledges the 40th anniversary of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’ work-in … the right to work as a principle to be defended by workers across Britain … reaffirms the contemporary relevance of Jimmy Reid’s words in his 1972 rectorial address at the University of Glasgow’, was endorsed by an overwhelming cross-party majority.24 Several SMPs remarked that the history of the campaign preserved important morals for today, not least the maxim that ‘unity creates strength’. Addressing UCS veterans who had gathered in the public gallery to hear the debate, Labour SMP Iain Gray’s tribute was particularly encouraging: ‘You have given this country a story that tells us something about who we were and what we can all be today. Your victory in the past sustains our struggles today, and for that we thank you’.25 And it was for similar reasons that Ann Guedes, one of Cinema Action‘s founders, accepted an invitation to participate in a commemorative showing of UCSrelated films.26 Funded by Unite the Union, the three day event included screenings of *UCS 1*, *Class Struggle* (also produced by Cinema Action), a specially commissioned film by the STUCs Kevin Buchanan and a recorded speech by the late Tony Benn.27 Guedes’ following eulogy perhaps best sums up the work-in’s continuing importance as living cultural heritage:

The UCS Work-in was about looking forward ... We need a similar approach from current activists. It inspired other takeovers then and should be doing so now. I was losing confidence in the possibility of people learning those lessons. But when I arrived in Glasgow hope and confidence were rekindled. It is possible. That fire, that humour, is not something in the past, it’s there in every man, woman and child in Scotland.28

That transcripts and recordings of many of the above-mentioned films, poems and songs are to be found in the Research Collections of Glasgow Caledonian University’s archive, alongside other historically significant materials that relate to the work-in and Glasgow’s radical history more generally, is worth mentioning.29 As are the University’s archivists (led by Carole McCallum) and their enthusiasm to make the archive’s collections accessible to the wider lay public, so promoting the city’s social history beyond the confines of academia (see Griffin 2015, 55-82). Jimmy Reid’s untimely death in August 2010 provided a unique opportunity for Glasgow University Archive Services to acquire a sizable quantity of Reid’s personal papers, press cuttings and other memorabilia. At the time of writing, though much of the material has still to be properly catalogued, and the usual access restrictions notwithstanding, the University archivists have already made some of the documents available for research purposes. Whether the so-called Jimmy Reid Collection ends up becoming, to paraphrase James D. Young, a resource for political activists remains to be seen. The establishment of the Jimmy Reid Foundation (by the editorial board of the Scottish Left Review) as a left-wing think tank and the annual Jimmy Reid Memorial Lecture have also helped rekindle public interest in the UCS action.30 And Alex Salmond’s (then First Minister of Scotland) decision to promote Reid’s celebrated rectorial address, along with biographical and UCS related materials, as part of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence for secondary school pupils will ensure that the deeds of 1971-72 are taught to future generations, not least the object lesson that ordinary people have a valuable role to play in the ebb and flow of a social democracy.31

More recently, the People’s Palace raised over £45,000 to acquire a mixed media portrait of Reid by artist and lecturer Barry Atherton. Completed in 2007 to mark Reid's 75th birthday, Atherton conceived the figurative artwork as a ‘biographical portrait’. Almost 9ft high by 5ft wide, the painting depicts Reid with arms outstretched, as though in mid oratory, surrounded by a montage of 65 objects and persons that signify key moments and influences during his lifetime. However, unlike Currie’s mural, the dramatis personae of Atherton’s painting comprise both heroes (who we see the right way up) and villains (deliberately represented upside down): from Tony Benn and several UCS comrades marching side-by-side, Robert Burns, David Hume, Karl Marx, James Keir Hardie, Helen Crawfurd, Mary Barbour, William Gallacher, James Maxton, John Maclean, Harry Pollitt, Aneurin Bevan, Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush to Tony Blair. The dozen or so objects include miners’ lamps, Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man*, a copy of *The* *New York Times* that featured Reid’s ‘Alienation’ speech, jazz records, Milton Freidman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, a statue of an ancient Greek philosopher, Alastair Dunn’s *Peasants’ Revolt*, a cricket bat, Eugene Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*, a model of the Scottish Parliament, a *Solidarność* poster, BAFTA statuettes and a copy of Reid’s own *Power Without Principles*, a damning critique of New Labour, published in 1999.

 Though first and foremost a tribute to Reid and Scottish radicalism, the background paraphernalia also serves as a homage to a generation of working-class autodidacts-cum-organic intellectuals who, like Reid, dedicated their lives to methodical study, self-improvement and revolutionary proselytising to strengthen the cause of the CPGB and historical materialism more generally. Indeed, several historians and sociologists have commented on the Party’s zeal for political education. Writing just before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Raphael Samuel (1987, 75-83) noted that so-called ‘deep thinking’, the ‘religion of books’ and the ‘art of argument’ were especially important among the Party’s industrial cadres (cf. Rose 2002, 298-320). Samuel also observed the Party’s strict class morality, a redemptive ‘Promethean ethics’ in which ‘loyalty, combativity and self-sacrifice’ were paramount (Samuel 1987, 61-65). It is with this class consciousness in mind that, in a supplementary film about Atherton’s portrait, we see Reid querying his accentuated significance compared to ‘ma pals’ before insistently stating (and ever so slightly correcting the artist’s political understanding of the subject matter) the dialectical nature of the biographical painting: ‘There’s a co-relationship here. You influence the mass movement; the mass movement influences you’.32 Like so many other working-class communists who were mostly selfless in their pursuit of a more just society, Reid’s distain for self-seeking egotism and the cult of personality are plain for all to see; it also serves as a positive reminder that individual achievements are but one cog in the wheel of political struggle.

**Conclusion**

One of only two remaining shipyards on the Clyde with a combined workforce of 3,500, both Govan and Scotstoun (formerly Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd) are owned by BAE Systems and specialise in naval surface shipbuilding. Despite being designated a ‘centre of excellence’ and the guarantee of a further £348million defence contract for the construction of the new Type 26 frigates, BAE threatened to close one of the Clyde yards had the Scottish electorate voted for independence in 2014. BAE’s warning followed the Ministry of Defence’s suggestion that ‘UK warships are only built in UK shipyards’ (*Daily Record*, 12 August 2014), in which case warship building would have returned to Portsmouth (despite BAE’s earlier announcement that it would no longer build naval ships at Portsmouth from 2015 onwards). Faced with yet another threat of closure and redundancies, several veterans of the UCS work-in argued that Scottish independence will ‘bring a new lease of life’ for Scotland's declining shipbuilding industry (21 July 2014). In an open letter addressed to ‘the shipbuilders of Scotland and workers in related industries’, the signatories stated that relying on BAE and the MOD alone is ‘not a sustainable future for Scotland’s shipyards’ and that freeing the industry from military contracts would create greater diversification, long-term security, and a ‘positive impact on surrounding areas, supply chains, and the industrial future of a neglected Scottish economy’ (*Daily Record*, 21 July 2014).33 Invoking the same rhetoric used by Jimmy Reid during the events 1971-72, the former activists concluded by suggesting that:

 the great threat that looms over [Scotland’s] shipbuilding industry is the threat from no change, from keeping on the same downward path with Westminster … with a Yes vote the difference will be that rather than decisions resting at Westminster, they will be in the hands of people and the government of Scotland … This will happen when power to create the future is in the hands of those who can be trusted with it, the people who value the industry that has been at the heart of Glasgow for a century, the working people of Scotland themselves … We are the people with the greatest stake in getting this right and that means we, rather than politicians at Westminster, will do the best job of growing Scotland’s shipbuilding sector (*Daily Record*, 21 July 2014).

Since the Scottish independence referendum, party political debate about the future of Britain’s shipbuilding industry has become even more visible, north and south of the border. For example, following speculation that a £1bn contract for three new Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ships is to be awarded to a foreign competitor, Nicola Sturgeon and Jeremy Corbyn, respective leaders of the Scottish National Party and the Labour Party, have called for the Ministry of Defence to honour existing shipbuilding contracts, and to commit to building any new vessels in British shipyards. Speaking at a ‘Build Them in Britain’ press conference in Govan, May 2018, Corbyn criticised Teresa May’s government for ‘trashing’ Britain’s ‘proud tradition of building some of the best ships in the world’ with its relentless pursuit of economic policies that serve only to ‘accelerate and deepen’ Britain’s ‘industrial decline’.34 And Sturgeon has been especially vociferous about the Conservative’s ‘blatant betrayal’ of ‘promises made’ during the independence referendum that the Clyde shipyards would be home to a £200m ‘frigate factory’ for the Royal Navy’s Type 31 programme.35 (Originally, the MoD had promised that a total of thirteen Type 31 frigates would be built on Clydeside, but it has since committed to building just eight). Furthermore, just as UCS management had failed to adopt modern production techniques in the late 1960s, there are concerns that BAE Systems has a similar ‘make do and mend’ attitude when it comes future investment, which has resulted in the two remaining shipyards’ facing ‘constrained capacity’.36

Additionally, both Sturgeon and Corbyn have delivered the Jimmy Reid Memorial Lecture in recent years and, though to be expected, both mentioned the importance of the UCS work-in as being an integral part of Scotland’s industrial heritage and cultural identity. Corbyn impelled us to ‘never forget the reason shipbuilding in our country has even survived is due to the collective action of shipyard workers themselves’ before singling out the UCS shipbuilders who ‘fought to give this industry a future’.37 Sturgeon’s 2015 address went further still: speaking at a time when the government was threatening to weaken trade union rights and to abolish the Human Rights Act, Sturgeon reminded the audience, per Reid’s rectorial address, that ‘humans are essentially social beings’ and to thus reject a society ‘where human beings are told that they are expendable; where ordinary people are excluded from the forces of decision-making; where people feel themselves to be victims of forces beyond their control’. Instead, Sturgeon urged that we ‘build a better society, based on respecting rights, recognising dignity and encouraging and, crucially, enabling each other’s potential’. Quoting the final verse of the final song that was played at Reid’s funeral, Paul Robeson’s rendering of ‘Ode to Joy’, she concluded thus: ‘None shall push aside another/None shall let another fall/March beside me, sisters and brothers/All for one and one for all’.38

Corbyn and Sturgeon’s neo-protectionist rhetoric and their parties’ respective assurances to rehabilitate Scotland’s industrial regions (Clydeside in particular) are even more salient apropos the worldwide resurgence in populist demagoguery. To be sure, the likes of Trump and Brexit reveal worrying signs of right-wing nationalism whose histories are decades old and beyond the scope of this article. Suffice to say that chauvinist racism and anti-immigrant xenophobia are inextricably connected with the transnational legacies of imperialism, colonialism and slavery. And the heritage industries, whatever their form, have been implicated in the perpetuation of such ideologies, as highlighted in the introduction. On the other hand, a proliferating body of research and political commentary suggests that unrestrained financial capitalism and the loss of faith in liberal democracy are equally to blame for the present legitimation crisis (for example, Calhoun 2016; Evans and Tilley 2017; McKenzie 2017; Streeck 2017; Monk 2018; Younge 2018). More specifically, political elites on both sides of the Atlantic have since been criticised for systematically forsaking the socially disadvantaged in the mistaken belief that economic neoliberalism and cosmopolitan identitarianism were the only games in town. For too long have ordinary denizens endured the disempowering effects of a democratic deficit.

It is in this wider global context that the abovementioned efforts to sanitise Glasgow’s radical history through place marketing and urban gentrification, and international debates about industrial heritage more generally, need to be understood; not least because whereas dozens of other deindustrialised cities and towns have experienced a ‘rightward shift in electoral politics’ (High 2013, 145), it would seem that the majority of Glasgow’s electorate are broadly progressive, evident in the city’s widespread support for the pro-immigration Scottish Nationalist and Labour Parties in recent elections and the 66.6 per cent majority who voted to remain in the 2016 European Union referendum.39 Furthermore, though ‘left behind’ after a four-decade absence of any meaningful industrial strategy, the spirit of the UCS campaign is still of great importance to the city’s historical identity as Red Clydeside and what remains of its left body politic. For many Glaswegians, the work-in continues to serve as valuable reminder of what workers, united and with public support, can accomplish, as seen with the various instances of grassroots resistance from local groups and their creative recuperation of Glasgow’s actually existing industrial heritage as means with which to challenge and negotiate the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (Smith 2006) of expert-led regeneration projects and the government’s recent threats to further emasculate the Clyde’s shipbuilding capabilities.

Hence the significance, too, of cultural representations that recontextualise and repoliticise the UCS campaign for present and future generations of socialists and working people. Such depictions also serve as a poignant reminder that cultural heritage can and should include the lived experiences of ordinary people, especially those that have struggled to remake and represent themselves in the aftermath of late twentieth-century deindustrialisation (Smith *et al* 2011, 13), be it in the UK or similarly affected communities elsewhere in the world. This final point is especially important given the still ongoing attempts to marginalise world histories of class struggle; the western media’s stigmatisation of working-class communities as philistine and undeserving; and the continuing assault on workers’ rights by functionaries of state and global capitalism. And whilst comparisons between the current political conjuncture and the final years of the Weimar Republic are grossly exaggerated, there is nevertheless a clear and present danger that further abandoning the working class and oppressed groups to the inequities of the market and undemocratic liberalism will almost certainly make a bad situation worse. In this regard, the example of Glasgow and the public history of the UCS work-in bestow a resource of optimism for those who still recognise the relational principles of internationalism, solidarity and community; the alternative, to paraphrase Jimmy Reid, is a world dominated by self-serving populism, cynical defeatism and misplaced anger, in short, the loss of social hope.

**Notes**

1 For a fuller discussion of Scottish nationalism and self-determination, past and present, see Nairn (1977); Davidson (2000); Foster (2002); Davidson (2014).

2 UCS was made up of five shipyards: Clydebank’s John Brown & Company, Charles Connell & Company and Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd on the north bank, and Alexander Stephen & Sons and Fairfield on the south bank.

3 Indeed, the radical film collective was the only media outfit allowed to document the dispute from an insider’s perspective, as the UCS Coordinating Committee distrusted mainstream journalists and thus prevented them from entering the yards. *UCS1*is included in the BFI compilation **‘**Tales from the Shipyard**'**. See also, http://www.cinemaaction.co.uk/films/

4 Other prominent shop stewards included Jimmy Airlie, Sammy Gilmore and Sam Barr.

5 Viz. the Clyde Workers' Committee, Independent Labour Party, Socialist Labour Party, British Socialist Party and Communist Unity Group.

6 Cf. McKinlay and Morris (1991) who argue that the ‘networking’ activities of the Independent Labour Party were chiefly responsible for augmenting Glasgow’s radical politics during this period.

7 http://www.fairfieldgovan.co.uk/heritage/

8 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-43114172

9 Comprehensive analyses of Glasgow’s various regeneration policies include: Boyle and Hughes (1991); Wishart (1991); Booth and Boyle (1993); Mooney (2004); Boyle et al (2008); Varna (2014); Johnson (2016, 85-122). For an interesting photographic essay, see http://www.disappearing-glasgow.com

10 More information and a short film are available online: http://www.workerscity.org/comment.html

11 The group published *Workers City: The Real Glasgow Stands Up* (1988), *The Reckoning: Beyond the Culture City Rip-Off* (1990), and twenty-odd editions of *The Keelie* newsletter over a five year period.

12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB5OK8zIQgs>

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16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB5OK8zIQgs>

17 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB5OK8zIQgs>

18 Ross McKibbin (1986) claimed, somewhat cavalierly, that the UCS work-in was ‘probably no longer even part of the folk memory’ as far back as the mid-1980s.

19 The drawing is on permanent display in the STUC Glasgow headquarters.

20 http://ucsat40.blogspot.com

21 https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/music/reconnecting-us-with-a-community-triumph-of-40-years-ago-1-2090468; recordings of the concert can be viewed on Johnstone’s Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/191759520928415/videos/2690585425636/

22 https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/tony-benn-on-why-spirit-of-famous-shipyard-1110606

23 http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/news/2011/julyaug/0108.htm

24 <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/sp/?id=2011-09-15.42.0>

25 https://www.theyworkforyou.com/sp/?id=2011-09-15.42.0

26 http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/ucs/UCSfilmflyerMarch2012.pdf

27 https://dearkitty1.wordpress.com/2012/04/23/workers-struggles-on-film/

28 http://www.scottishleftreview.org/reviews/reviews-11/

29 http://ucsat40.blogspot.com/2011/09/exhibition-features-wealth-of-ucs.html

30 Speakers so far include: Alex Salmond, Len McCluskey, Nicola Sturgeon, Jeremy Corbyn, Mark Serwotka and Frances O’Grady.

31 In partnership with Learning and Teaching Scotland, the Heritage Education Forum, Clyde Waterfront and (the now defunct) Clydebank Rebuilt.

32 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSkUrqqkAts

33 Alan Mackinnon (2009) has long argued that the UK’s shipyards could be regenerated were the UK government to invest money (saved by cancelling Trident) in defence diversification and new tidal power technology.

34 https://scottishlabour.org.uk/blog/jeremy-corbyn-calls-for-navy-shipbuilding-contracts-to-stay-in-the-uk/; https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-44074894; https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/24/corbyn-build-it-in-britain-public-contracts-manufacturing; https://labour.org.uk/press/jeremy-corbyn-full-speech-supporting-uk-shipbuilding/

35 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-41174619; https://theferret.scot/sturgeon-indyref-shipbuilding-promises-broken/; https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/nicola-sturgeon-clyde-shipyard-workers-let-down-and-betrayed-1-4552903; http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16171530.Nicola\_Sturgeon\_hits\_out\_at\_UK\_Government\_over\_Scottish\_shipyard\_\_\_39\_betrayal\_\_39\_/;

36 http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15101460.Major\_investment\_scrapped\_at\_Upper\_Clyde\_s\_last\_yards/

37 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNpElyrZpgE

38 <http://www.ukpol.co.uk/nicola-sturgeon-2015-speech-at-jimmy-reid-memorial-lecture/>

39 Though more narrowly in favour, even Glasgow’s most deprived constituencies were pro-remain: https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=34119&p=0

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